

Statement on the Resignation of Princeton N. Lyman as United States Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan *December 10, 2012*

For the last 2 years, Ambassador Princeton Lyman has served as my Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, building on a long legacy of dedicated service in the United States Government. Princeton has done a tremendous job in helping to realize the promise of an independent South Sudan and working toward the international vision of Sudan and South Sudan living side by side in peace. I have valued his

extraordinary service, which has been appreciated by the United States and the international community. The people of Sudan and South Sudan, who have suffered so much, have the opportunity to seize a brighter future because of Princeton's efforts to urge both sides to put the interests of their people first. I am deeply grateful for Princeton's steadfast and tireless leadership and wish him and his family well.

Statement on United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan E. Rice *December 13, 2012*

Today I spoke to Ambassador Susan Rice and accepted her decision to remove her name from consideration for Secretary of State. For two decades, Susan has proven to be an extraordinarily capable, patriotic, and passionate public servant. As my Ambassador to the United Nations, she plays an indispensable role in advancing America's interests. Already, she has secured international support for sanctions against Iran and North Korea, worked to protect the people of Libya, helped achieve an independent South Sudan, stood up for Israel's security and legitimacy, and served as an advocate for U.N. reform and the human rights of all people. I am grateful that Susan will continue to serve as our Ambassador at the United

Nations and a key member of my Cabinet and national security team, carrying her work forward on all of these and other issues. I have every confidence that Susan has limitless capability to serve our country now and in the years to come and know that I will continue to rely on her as an advisor and friend. While I deeply regret the unfair and misleading attacks on Susan Rice in recent weeks, her decision demonstrates the strength of her character and an admirable commitment to rise above the politics of the moment to put our national interests first. The American people can be proud to have a public servant of her caliber and character representing our country.

Remarks at a Hanukkah Reception *December 13, 2012*

The President. Good evening, everybody.

Audience members. Good evening.

The President. Well, thank you for coming to the White House tonight to celebrate the sixth night of Hanukkah. It is truly an honor to host so many leaders from the Jewish community this evening. Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren is here. And obviously, I know I speak for all of us when we say that Ameri-

ca's support for our friend and ally Israel remains unshakeable during these difficult times.

Many members of Congress and local government are here, and we want to welcome you. We are graced by two Supreme Court Justices, several members of my Cabinet and administration, so, everybody, be on your best behavior. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the incredibly talented members of the West Point Jewish Chapel Cadet Choir for their service. They are incredible young people. Obviously, we're in awe of their service to our Nation and for sharing a couple of Hanukkah favorites with the Marine Band.

And finally, I'd like to recognize the rabbis and lay leaders who traveled from all over the country to be here. Thank you for sharing the holiday with us. We're grateful.

So tonight, as we gather to light the sixth candle of Hanukkah, we remember an enduring story of resilience and optimism. Over 2,000 years ago, a tyrant forbade the Israelites from practicing their religion, and his forces desecrated the holy temple. So Judah Maccabee gathered a small band of believers to fight this oppression, and against all odds, they prevailed. The Maccabees liberated Jerusalem and restored the faith of its people. And when they went to reclaim the temple, the people of Jerusalem received another gift from God: The oil that should have lasted only 1 night burned for 8. That miraculous flame brought hope, and it sustained the faithful.

To this day, Jews around the world honor the Maccabees' everlasting hope that light will overcome the darkness, that goodness will overcome evil, and that faith can accomplish miracles.

The menorah that we're using tonight and the man who will light it are both powerful symbols of that spirit. Six weeks ago, the Temple Israel Synagogue in Long Beach, New York, was badly damaged by Hurricane Sandy. But this 90-year-old menorah survived, and I am willing to bet it will survive another 90 years and another 90 years after that. So tonight it shines as a symbol of perseverance and as a reminder of those who are still recovering from Sandy's destruction: a reminder of resilience and hope and the fact that we will be there for them as they recover.

So I want to thank Rabbi David Bauman for sharing your congregation's blessed menorah with us. We pray that its light will carry victims of Sandy and all Americans to a brighter tomorrow. And we're confident that it will.

And we're confident that it will, because for centuries, the menorah has served as a source of inspiration and courage for all those dreaming of a better future, and Rabbi Larry Bazer knows that as well as anybody.

Now, we had hoped that Rabbi would join us to light the candles last year, but he wasn't able to make it. We don't get that very often. Usually, when we invite people, they come. [*Laughter*] But we gave him another chance because he had a pretty good excuse the first time.

Last Hanukkah, Rabbi Bazer—and he happens to be the Joint Forces Chaplain for the Massachusetts National Guard—was 4 months into his deployment in Afghanistan, and he lit a custom-built electric menorah in the central square of Camp Phoenix in Kabul. As the only rabbi in Afghanistan at the time, he spent every night of Hanukkah with a different group of soldiers, reminding them of the Maccabees' perseverance and bringing them faith to guide their challenging work.

Even in the face of great danger, the message of Hanukkah endures. And it continues to inspire those all over the world who stand for freedom and opportunity, and we could not be more grateful to Rabbi Bazer for his extraordinary service to our country as well as his service to his congregation.

I think the Rabbi stands here alongside this menorah both as a symbol of hope and perseverance and determination and duty. And it also reminds us that there are sacrifices that are involved in defending our values. Obviously, we're grateful to the men and women who serve our Nation so nobly and so bravely all around the world. And our thoughts and prayers in this holiday season especially go out to those who are away from home during the holiday season.

But obviously, the lessons of Hanukkah also apply to those of us who should be serving in different ways in our own communities, in our workplaces, in our own families, as citizens of this Nation: that we have obligations to one another; that we're stronger together than we are apart; that we have to think about future generations and not just the present.

Those are all values that we have to also make sacrifices to defend. And so I want to welcome all of you. I'm honored to be with you. I see a lot of good friends around the room. But at this time, I'd like to invite Rabbi Bazer to join me to light the White House menorah.

[At this point, a blessing was offered, and the menorah was lit.]

The President. Have a wonderful evening, everybody. We're going to go around and try and shake some hands.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Associate Justices Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Elena Kagan; and Lt. Col. Laurence Bazer, rabbi, Temple Beth Shalom in Framingham, MA.

Remarks on the Shootings in Newtown, Connecticut December 14, 2012

This afternoon I spoke with Governor Malloy and FBI Director Mueller. I offered Governor Malloy my condolences on behalf of the Nation and made it clear he will have every single resource that he needs to investigate this heinous crime, care for the victims, counsel their families.

We've endured too many of these tragedies in the past few years. And each time I learn the news, I react not as a President, but as anybody else would: as a parent. And that was especially true today. I know there's not a parent in America who doesn't feel the same overwhelming grief that I do.

The majority of those who died today were children, beautiful little kids between the ages of 5 and 10 years old. They had their entire lives ahead of them: birthdays, graduations, weddings, kids of their own. Among the fallen were also teachers, men and women who devoted their lives to helping our children fulfill their dreams.

So our hearts are broken today, for the parents and grandparents, sisters and brothers of these little children and for the families of the adults who were lost. Our hearts are broken for the parents of the survivors as well, for as blessed as they are to have their children home tonight, they know that their children's innocence has been torn away from them too early, and there are no words that will ease their pain.

As a country, we have been through this too many times. Whether it's an elementary school

in Newtown or a shopping mall in Oregon or a temple in Wisconsin or a movie theater in Aurora or a street corner in Chicago, these neighborhoods are our neighborhoods, and these children are our children. And we're going to have to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics.

This evening Michelle and I will do what I know every parent in America will do, which is hug our children a little tighter, and we'll tell them that we love them, and we'll remind each other how deeply we love one another. But there are families in Connecticut who cannot do that tonight. And they need all of us right now. In the hard days to come, that community needs us to be at our best as Americans, and I will do everything in my power as President to help. Because while nothing can fill the space of a lost child or loved one, all of us can extend a hand to those in need, to remind them that we are there for them, that we are praying for them, that the love they felt for those they lost endures not just in their memories, but also in ours.

May God bless the memory of the victims and, in the words of Scripture, heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.